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ABSTRACT

The information in this report is based on the experiences of Cornell University and the University of South Carolina in responding to the needs of gay students in their residence halls. A starter kit on developing gay issue programming for other campuses is presented which includes a Gay Programming Checklist and a description of a sample workshop. Goals of the workshop are listed: (1) to increase awareness of the widespread impact homosexuality has on all students; (2) to develop an understanding of what it is to be gay; and (3) to assist staff in developing a more tolerant environment for students. A four-part workshop program is briefly outlined which includes desensitization, reeducation, film or panel presentations, and discussions. Suggestions for other techniques which may be helpful in developing workshops are also given. Sensitizing exercises are presented which are designed to help nongay people recognize some of the insensitivity and discrimination that society practices in regard to gay people. A 20-item quiz on gay issues is included and answers are given and explained. The paper concludes with a selected bibliography of books, articles, magazines, periodicals, and audio-visual materials on gay issues and on counseling gay clients. (NRB)

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The Invisible Minority: Training Residence Hall Staff to Respond to Gay Issues

Presented at the 1985

American College Personnel Association Conference

Boston, Massachusetts

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Abstract

THE INVISIBLE MINORITY: TRAINING RESIDENCE HALL STAFF TO RESPOND TO GAY ISSUES

Only recently have our institutions began to acknowledge the existence of gays and lesbians among our clientele. Recent research indicates that 14% of the male population and 5% of the female population are gay. Increasingly, our institutions are being asked to respond to the needs of this "invisible" minority.

This program is based on the initial experiences of Cornell University and the University of South Carolina in responding to these needs in their residence halls.

The program will focus on the history of these efforts, a model training program, and the implications of such programs for the institution and for the programmers.

DESCRIPTION

THE INVISIBLE MINORITY: TRAINING RESIDENCE HALL STAFF TO TO RESPOND TO GAY ISSUES

They are white, black, hispanic, and asian; male and female; old and young; promiscuous and celibate; executives and production workers. They are the minority that everyone sees, but no one recognizes. They are the gays and lesbians of our society. Recent research indicates that 14% of the male population and 5% of the female population are gay. One out of every four families has a gay member. They are the last significant minority to be denied civil rights and they are becoming increasingly aggressive in their pursuit of those rights. The gay rights movement that was born in the sixties at Stonewall, is assuming a new seriousness in the 80's in the midst of a major health crisis that is redefining gay life. This new seriousness is having an ever greater impact on our college and university campuses.

This program is based on the experiences of two major universities that differ significantly in terms of institutional culture and student attitudes. It's purpose is to share, with fellow professionals, the efforts taken to develop an effective training program for residence hall staff concerning gay issues, the needs of gay students, and the adjustments nongay persons and institutions must make to accomodate gay lifestyles.

The program will focus on the demonstrated need for this kind of programming, the development of appropriate programming approaches, a "starter kit" on developing gay issue programming for other campuses, and a discussion of the implications this programming has for institutions and the persons who present the programming.

Specifically, the presentors will share the historical events leading to the decision to develop and implement a training program for residence staff on their campuses. The process of selecting materials and approaches for training the staff will be discussed, as well as, the decisions leading to when and where to offer this programming. The

presentors will offer a model for training hall staff in gay related issues, with supporting materials and the means for tayloring this program to the needs of individual campuses. To conclude the program the presentors will discuss with the participants some of the implications of developing programs on gay issues, specifically, impacts on gay/nongay students, staff, institutions, and for the presentors themselves.

Gay Programming Checklist

General

____ Why am I doing this?

____ Whose needs am I responding to?

____ What needs am I trying to address?

____ What are the political implications of this action?

____ Who on campus or in the community will support this action? Why?

____ Who on campus or in the community will oppose this action? Why?

____ What are the possible ways of presenting this topic?

____ What resources, human and other, are available to me?

____ What reactions might I have to be prepared to respond to as a result of this programming?

____ Who needs to know about this programming in advance? How do I prepare them?

____ If people "come out" as a response to this program will they find support and/or resources?

____ How will I evaluate the impact/s of this programming?

____ What will be the implications for:
- the students (gay and non/gay)?
- the staff?
- the department?

- the institution?
- the community and/or members of your external environment (e.g. alumni, Board Members, Legislators, etc.

Personal

_____ Am I secure in my own sexuality? What are my concerns?

_____ How will I react if I am labeled as being homosexual (or how will I react to having my homosexuality become known)?

_____ How will I react if a staff member of significant other "comes out", or rejects me for my support of this issue?

_____ What are the implications of doing this program for me?

From "The Invisible Minority: Training Residence Hall Staff to Respond to Gay Issues." presented at ACPA Boston, MA, 1985.

WORKSHOP - SAMPLE

THE INVISIBLE MINORITY - BECOMING MORE SENSITIVE TO GAY STUDENTS

GOALS

1. To increase awareness of the widespread impact homosexuality has on students, gay and non-gay.

2. To develop an understanding of what it is to be gay in today's society.

3. To assist staff in developing a more tolerant environment where students can explore their sexuality and develop respect for different lifestyles.

PROGRAM

1. Desensitization - (optional) Have group generate all of society's labels for homosexuals, e.g. gay, faggot, queer, dike, etc. Take a few minutes to ask the group: Why are the negative labels? Where have these labels originated? What myths does society generally believe about homosexuals? (see attached handout)

2. Reeducation - Present quiz on the facts about homosexuality. Use Quiz and answer sheet as discussion guide. Present and briefly describe Kinsey's bell curve of sexuality. Use this to discuss not only homosexuality, but also to discuss the normal homosexual feelings that the majority of individuals may experience at some point in their lives.

3. Present film or panel (panel preferred) - give group opportunity to hear, see, and ideally talk with a panel of gay students. This provides the opportunity for students to "demystify" gay people.

4. Discussion: Topics to be covered: How do you support students at they explore their sexual feelings? How do you manage conflict between gay and nongay students? How do you develop a more tolerant supportive atmosphere in the residence halls? How do you facilitate students examining their sexuality as a part of their lifestyles? How to identifying gay role models?

COMMENTS

Some other techniques which can be helpful in developing workshops:

- Use 3 x 5 cards to solicit expectations for the workshop prior to beginning. Use the back side to have the participants write down the name of gay person closest to them , e.g. brother, neighbor, uncle, etc.

- Use reaction card to obtain feedback and possible follow-ups

- Use small groups to do desensitization exercise

- Orient program to gay support or supporting nongays learning to deal with gays.

Sensitizing Exercise - Gay Issues

It is often difficult for nongay people to understand what it is to be gay. Part of this is due to a lack of information about homosexuality, and sometimes, sexuality in general. Additionally, the nongay person may have difficulty understanding the gay persons needs outside of a strictly sexual context. "Gay liberation" goes beyond not being discriminated against at work, or in obtaining housing or medical services. It is the need by gay people to have their lives and lifestyles respected as a normal and natural alternative.

This exercise is to designed to help nongay people recognize some of the insenstivity and discrimination that our society practices in regard to gay people. The key to making gay people an accepted and valued part of our society is the development of a respect for their needs, just as we are sensitive to the needs of nongay persons.

Exercise

- Take a few minutes and think back over the last week. Jot down on a piece of paper the events that have occured to you, e.g. work, visit with the family, gone shopping, etc.

- Assume for a moment that you and your significant other are part of a small nongay population in the world. Children are produced by cloning and genetic engineering. In this world, nongay's are thought of as being sick or immoral. Employers often fire employees who openly admit that they are nongay. If they are not fired, they are rarely promoted or given jobs with high visibility, because employers are concerned with public reaction. You know that if any of your significant loved ones knew you were nongay they would be terribly hurt and guilty. People tell jokes about you, mostly about your being effeminant if male and masculine if female. The ironic, thing about your situation is that few people who know you realize that you are nongay.

How would your last week have been different? What things would you have had to do differently? How would you feel if you had to live like this year in and year out?

•What impact do you think these pressures have on gay people in our society? How do we all lose when members of our society experience these pressures? What can you do to help relieve these pressures in your environment?

Quiz on Gay Issues

Many people base most of what they know about gay people on the myths that they have heard. This quiz is to test your knowledge of gay issues and to present accurate information on which you can operate in the future.

1. People choose to be gay or straight.
   ___ True
   ___ False

2. We know the cause of homosexuality?
   ___ True
   ___ False

3. Homosexuality is not natural. There is no evidence of it in species outside of man.
   ___ True
   ___ False

4. A person can change his "sexual preference" with appropriate therapy.
   ___ True
   ___ False

5. What percentage of the American population is gay?
   ___ 33 %
   ___ 20 %
   ___ 10 %
   ___ 3 %

6. Gays and lesbians are fairly easy to identify. Gay men tend to be effeminate and lesbians tend to be masculine.
   ___ True
   ___ False

7. Homosexuality is no longer considered a mental illness.
   ___ True
   ___ False

8. Homosexuals are more promiscous than heterosexuals.
   ___ True
   ___ False

9. There are very few "bisexuals" , most people are either homosexual or heterosexual.
   ___ True
   ___ False

10. What percentage of the population has had at least one homosexual experience during their adolescence?
   ___ 95%
   ___ 50 %
   ___ 33 %
   ___ 20 %
   ___ 10 %

11. The majority of child molesters are gay?
   ___ True
   ___ False

12. People who are homophobic, i.e. an irrational fear of gay people, usually are unresolved about their own sexuality.
   ___ True
   ___ False

13. Gay people try to convert others, especially children and teenagers, to the gay lifestyle.
   ___ True
   ___ False

14. Gay people are usually less successful that nongay people.
   ___ True
   ___ False

15. There have been very few significant contributions to society by gay people.

___ True
___ False

16. "Coming Out" is the process of accepting one's homosexuality and developing a compatible lifestyle. It usually, takes a short period of time to make these adjustments once a persons accepts his/her sexuality.
___ True
___ False

17. People who cross dress (wear the opposite sex's clothes) are usually homosexual.
___ True
___ False

18. One out of every four American families has a gay member.
___ True
___ False

19. There tend to be more gay men than lesbians.
___ True
___ False

20. There are some significant differences in the relationship between two gay men and two lesbians.
___ True
___ False

Answers to Quiz

1. False. Authorities seem to agree that sexual identity is established by age three. The decision becomes whether to accept and act on ones' identity.

2. False. There are a number of different theories, but there is little evidence to support any of them.

3. False. It exists in all forms of nature.

4. False. Efforts to change sexual preference, even with people highly motivated to change has met with very limited success (there is no longitutinal research to confirm that these techniques are successful long-term) and with those who are not interested in changing, totally unsuccessful.

5. 10%

6. False. Gay men and lesbians demonstrate the same range of behavior as does the more typical non/gay population.

7. True. Both the American Psychiatric Association (1973) and the American Psychological Association (1975) have removed homosexuality from their lists of mental disorders.

8. False. Information from Kinsey's research indicates that the number of sexual contacts by homosexuals is almost identical to that of heterosexuals.

9. False. Actually, there are more bisexuals than homosexuals, and theoretically, than heterosexuals.

10. 50%

11. False. 90% of sexual child abuse is committed by heterosexual men on minor females. 45% of all sexual child abuse is by the child's own

father. Homosexual persons are rarely involved.

12. True. There is some research to indicate that homophobic persons have unresolved homosexuals feelings of their own.

13. False. Gay people are fully aware that persuasion does not create sexual preference, if it did gay people would have long been persuaded to be hetersexual by the society in which they live.

14. False. At least in economic terms it would appear that gay people are at least as "successful" as non/gays. In a survey conducted by the Advocate of its 400,000 readers median household income was $34,900.

15. False. Some of the famous persons in history were gay, including, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Sappho, Walt Witman, Leonardo de Vinci, and Michalangelo. (see Gay History)

16. False. Even for people who are well adjusted to their sexuality, coming out is a life long process of over-coming societal discrimination and programming.

17. False. They are Transexuals, and are usually heterosexual. (Cross-dressing should be differentiated from drag, which is a form of camp used by gay people to mock non/gay stereotypes)

18. True.

19. True. For whatever reasons there tends to be more homosexuality in men (13%) than women (5%) (in all species). Additionally, it may be possible that women, who are allowed closer emotional contact with the same sex, less readily identify their feelings and/or behavior as homosexual.

20. True. Female relationships tend to be more stable. Males do more outward socializing, experience more one night stands, and maintain fewer long term relationships. This may be due to a lack of role models for males, who follow the non/gay culture in this respect.

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